



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20310-0111

March 29, 2004



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

The Honorable Duncan Hunter  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Fiscal Year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 573, directed the Secretary of the Army to submit a report on the progress of the Army College First Pilot Program.

The enclosed report represents four years of data from the Army College First Pilot Program and demonstrates that the program is an effective market expander for recruiting highly qualified youth. The program significantly increased the number of recruits. Additionally, we have observed a trend of individuals with a higher caliber of educational qualifications entering enlisted active duty.

The Pilot Program expands opportunities for higher education, vocational, and technical training for applicants prior to their entry onto active duty. We recommend legislation to establish College First Program as a permanent enlistment incentive option.

Thank you for your interest and support of Army recruiting. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (703) 697-9253.

Sincerely,

Reginald J. Brown  
Assistant Secretary of the Army  
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)

Enclosure



## **DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY REPORT ARMY COLLEGE FIRST PILOT PROGRAM**

This report provides estimates of the effectiveness of the Army College First program in increasing the number of, and level of qualifications of, persons entering the Army as enlisted members by encouraging recruits to pursue higher education or vocational or technical training before entry into active service in the Army.

### **REPORTING REQUIREMENT**

The reporting requirement in section 573 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, P. L. No. 106-65, states the following:

#### **SEC. 573. ARMY COLLEGE FIRST PILOT PROGRAM**

(g) Report.—Not later than February 1, 2004, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program. The report shall include the following:

- (1) The assessment of the Secretary regarding the value of the authority under this section for achieving the objectives of increasing the number of, and the level of qualifications of, persons entering the Army as enlisted members.
- (2) Any recommendation for legislation or other action that the Secretary considers appropriate to achieve those objectives through grants of entry delays and financial benefits for advanced education and training of recruits.

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the mid- to late-1990s, following the military drawdown, the Services experienced serious recruiting challenges. In response, recruiting resources were increased substantially. Still, the Services struggled to achieve the number of, and desired level of qualifications of, persons entering the military as enlisted members. In addition to a strong economy, the growing proportion of youth continuing their education upon graduation from high school, which rose from one half to two-thirds between the early 1980s and late 1990s (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000), posed a challenge to military recruiting, which traditionally has focused on the recruitment of youth upon high school graduation, as illustrated in Chart 1. Today, many youth who aspire to two- or four-year degrees are unwilling to postpone their education in order to serve in the active duty military. At the same time, a substantial proportion of such youth discontinue their post-secondary education following enrollment or, in other cases, are unable to enroll in post-secondary education following high school.

## Growth in Post-Secondary Education Worsened Youth Population's Fit With Traditional Recruiting Strategy

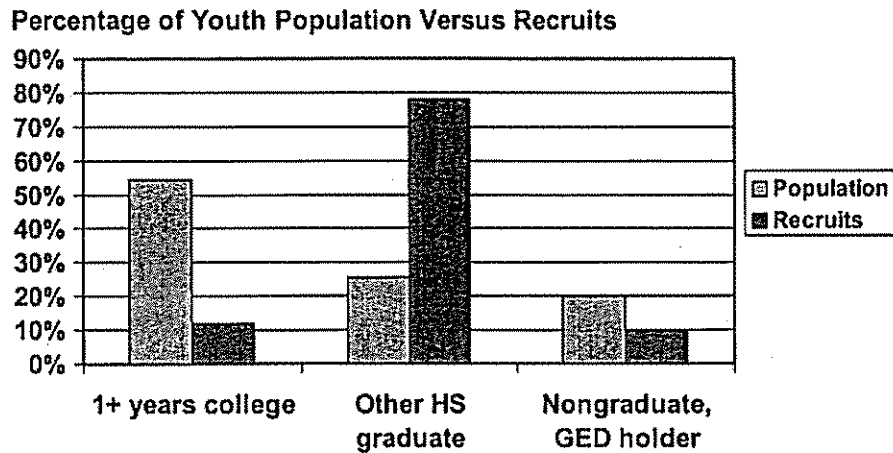


Chart 1

In response to these considerations, Section 573 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, P. L. No. 106-65, required the Secretary of the Army to establish a pilot program (the "Army College First" program) to assess whether the Army could increase the number of, and level of qualifications of, persons entering the Army as enlisted members by encouraging recruits to pursue higher education or vocational or technical training before entry into active service in the Army. Under the pilot program, the Secretary was authorized to (1) accept the enlistment of a person as a Reserve and to delay the enlistment of any such person in a regular component for the period during which the person is enrolled in and pursuing a program of education at an institution of higher education or a program of vocational or technical training on a full-time basis that is completed within two years; (2) pay an allowance to that person for each month of that period; and (3) to define and study any group not including persons receiving such a benefit and to compare that group with any group of persons who receive such benefits under the pilot program. The Secretary was authorized to conduct the pilot program during the period beginning on October 1, 1999 and ending on September 30, 2004.

### RESPONSE TO REQUIREMENTS

**Establishment of Pilot Program.** On February 3, 2000, the Secretary of the Army initiated the Army College First program. Eight of the Army's 41 recruiting battalions were included in each of three pilot program groups. In the first group, enlistees into the Army's College First program were entered into the Delayed Entry Program during the period in which they are enrolled in and pursuing a program of

education. In the second group, enlistees into the Army's College First program served in a drilling Reserve unit during the period in which they are enrolled in and pursuing a program of education. As authorized in Section 573, the third group of battalions served as a comparison group; persons enlisting into the Army in these battalions were not eligible for the College First program. The three groups of battalions were carefully balanced on characteristics known to affect recruiting outcomes. The characteristics included: geographic area; previous recruiting production; current recruiting missions and resources; demographic characteristics of the resident youth population; economic characteristics; educational attainment of the resident youth population; and the features of Army National Guard programs for funding post-secondary education that were available in the battalion.

**Assessment of value of Army College First program in increasing the number of, and level of qualifications of, persons entering the Army as enlisted members.** The methodology compares the number of highly qualified recruits (high school graduates and graduating seniors scoring in the upper half of the Armed Forces Qualification Test aptitude distribution) during each year of the Army College First program to the number of highly qualified enlistments during the baseline period (the 12 months just prior to program initiation, February 1999-January 2000). This ratio is calculated both for the recruiting battalions offering the College First program and for the balanced comparison group not offering the program. The change for the group offering College First is then compared with the change in the comparison group for the same time period; comparison group changes over time reflect national recruiting trends independent of College First program effects, and are accounted for and distinguished from the effects of the College First program in this manner.

College First has significantly increased the enlistment of highly qualified youth for active service in the Army and the number of such youth with post-secondary education. Chart 2 separates high aptitude (AFQT Category I-III A) recruits according to their educational attainment at the time of enlistment: high school senior; high school graduate with no college attendance; youth who have attended some college, but for less than one year (typically, college "stopouts"); and youth who have completed one or more years of college. Using the methodology described above, enlistments in each test year in the group of recruiting battalions offering College First are compared with enlistments in

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<sup>1</sup> Group one included Phoenix, Houston, Des Moines, Chicago, Milwaukee, New England, Baltimore, and Jackson; group two included Southern California, Sacramento, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Cleveland, Albany, Raleigh, and Columbia; and group three included Seattle, Portland, Dallas, Indianapolis, Nashville, Harrisburg, New York City, and Tampa. The second group was originally established to provide an additional source of highly qualified enlistees who would serve in the drilling reserve rather than in the Delayed Entry Program while they pursued post-secondary education. The requirement was assessed on a pilot basis because it was not clear whether such youth who might otherwise serve on active duty after pursuing post-secondary education would choose not to enlist into the College First program if they were required to drill while pursuing their schooling. After further discussions with the U.S. Army Reserve it was determined that (1) the USAR had other programs for attracting such recruits and (2) by the time many College First enlistees completed the training required to become qualified in their military occupational specialty their post-secondary education was completed and they were required to report for active duty. Consequently, the program did not provide an additional benefit to the USAR as intended, and it was therefore discontinued.

the same areas during the baseline period. The change in enlistments for these battalions is then compared with the change in enlistments for the recruiting battalions in the comparison group during the same time period. As shown in Chart 2, the increase in enlistments under College First has been greatest among the college stopout group (i.e., those with "some college"). The appeal of this program to youth in this group in particular is consistent both with their frequent need for financial assistance to continue their pursuit of higher education and their need for completion of a substantial amount of additional coursework to earn an Associates Degree. The College First pilot program also increased enlistments among youth having already completed a year or more of college and among high school graduates who have not as yet begun their post-secondary education, though to a lesser extent than among college stopouts. Such increases are consistent with the desires of some members of these groups to continue their education and the value of the Army College First program in helping them to do so. At the same time, many youth who have already completed a year or more of college may believe that the amount of additional education they desire does not warrant a commitment to active duty military service in return for assistance. By analogy, many of the high school graduates who have not pursued higher education may have chosen not to do so and, as a result, may not be interested in military programs providing financial assistance for college. As shown in Chart 2, the effectiveness of the Army College First program in increasing highly qualified enlistments grew over time among the youth in each of the education groups. The overall results are shown at the right side of the chart. By the fourth year of the pilot program, the overall increase in enlistments of highly qualified youth into the Army under College First was 16 percent.<sup>2</sup>

### Number and Qualifications of Army Enlistees Are Increasing Under College First

High Aptitude Enlistees in College First Group Versus Comparison Group

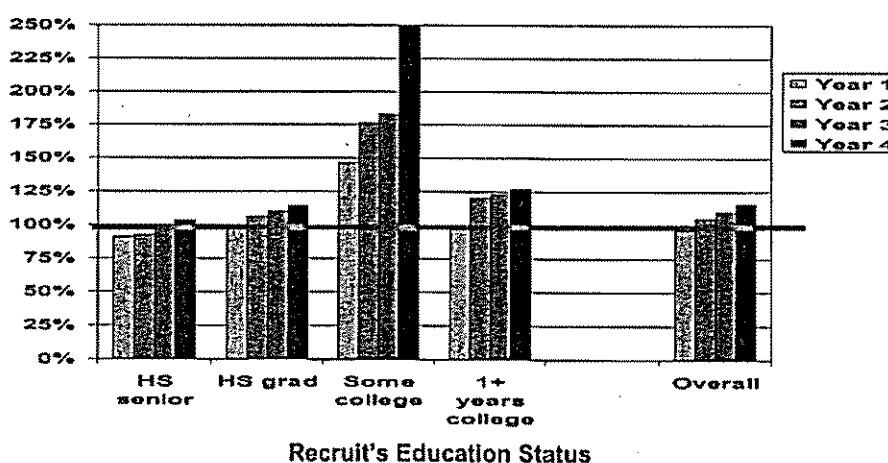


Chart 2

<sup>2</sup> Results cover data through nine months of test year four.

The College First program has only recently been emphasized as a means of increasing the number and qualifications of high school seniors entering the Army as enlisted members upon graduation. In part, this has been because meeting recruiting challenges required giving greater emphasis to the recruitment of graduates, who could enter active duty more quickly. In part, this also was because the maximum period in the Delayed Entry Program under College First needed to be extended to 30 months, instead of 24, to allow recruiters to enlist seniors into the College First program during their senior year while preserving the opportunity for such recruits to pursue higher education or vocational or technical training for up to two years before entry into active service in the Army. Emphasis is now being given to increasing enlistments among high aptitude graduating high school seniors through the College First program. Based on the results for high school graduates, this effort can be expected to further, substantially increase enlistments into the Army of highly qualified youth: seniors represent more than 4 million youth annually; many seniors have a need for financial assistance to continue their education; and such youth have significantly greater propensity to enlist than do youth who previously graduated but did not enlist upon completion of high school.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

College First significantly increases the number of, and level of qualifications of, persons entering the Army as enlisted members by encouraging recruits to pursue continued education prior to entry into active service in the Army.

We therefore recommend that:

- (a) College First be established as a permanent enlistment incentive program to increase the number, and the level of the qualifications, of persons entering the military as enlisted members by encouraging recruits to pursue higher education or vocational or technical training before entry into active service.
- (b) Under the "College First" program, the Secretary may—
  - (1) exercise the authority under section 513 of title 10, United States Code, to—
    - (A) accept the enlistment of a person as a Reservist for service in the Selected Reserve or Individual Ready Reserve of the Reserve component; and
    - (B) authorize, notwithstanding the limitation on the period of delay in subsection (b) of that section, a delay in the enlistment of any such person in the Regular component under that subsection for the period during which the person is enrolled in, and pursuing a program of education at, an institution of higher education, or a program of vocational or technical training, on a full-time basis that is to be completed within 30 months after the date of enlistment as a Reservist; and
  - (2) subject to paragraph (2) of subsection (e) and except as provided in paragraph (4) of that subsection, pay an allowance to a person accepted for enlistment under

paragraph (1)(A) for each month of the period during which the person is enrolled in and pursuing a program described in paragraph (1)(B).

(c) SPECIAL PAYS AND BONUSES.—Upon enlisting in the Regular component, a person who initially enlisted as a Reservist in the College First program may, at the discretion of the Secretary, be eligible for all regular special pays, bonuses, education benefits, and loan repayment programs for which the person is qualified.

(d) MAXIMUM PERIOD OF DELAY.—The period of delay authorized a person under paragraph (1)(B) of subsection (b) may not exceed the 30-month period beginning on the date the person's enlistment is accepted under paragraph (1)(A) of such subsection.

(e) MONTHLY ALLOWANCE.—(1) The monthly allowance paid under subsection (b)(2) shall be equal to the amount of the subsistence allowance provided for certain members of the Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps with the corresponding number of years of participation under section 209(a) of title 37, United States Code. The Secretary may supplement this stipend by an amount not to exceed \$225 per month.<sup>3</sup>

(2) The allowance may not be paid for more than 24 months and is only payable during periods of enrollment in the accredited institution while the member is attending classes or training sessions.

(3) A member of the Selected Reserve of a Reserve component may be paid an allowance under this section only for months during which the member meets the requirements of paragraph (2) and performs satisfactorily as a member of a unit of the Reserve component that trains as prescribed in section 10147(a)(1) of title 10, United States Code, or section 502(a) of title 32, United States Code. For the purpose of this section, satisfactory performance shall be determined under regulations prescribed by the Secretary.

(4) An allowance under this section is in addition to any other pay or allowance to which a member of a Reserve component is entitled by reason of participation in the Ready Reserve of that component.

(f) REPAYMENT OF ALLOWANCE.—(1) A member who, voluntarily, through the member's own action or failure to act when required to do so, or failure to remain qualified for active service (other than a member who is not qualified because of injury, illness, or other impairment not the result of the member's own misconduct or failure to act when required to act), fails to complete the term of active service for which the member enlisted shall repay the United States the amount which bears the same ratio to the total amount of that allowance paid to the person as the unserved part of the total required period of service bears to the total period.

(2) An obligation to repay the United States imposed under paragraph (1) is for all purposes a debt owed to the United States.

(3) The discharge of a person in bankruptcy under title 11, United States Code, that is entered less than five years after the date on which the person was enlisted in the Regular component under this section and section 513 of title 10, United States Code, does not discharge that person from a debt arising under paragraph (1).

(4) The Secretary may waive, in whole or in part, a debt arising under paragraph (1) in any case in which the Secretary determines that recovery would be against equity and good conscience or would be contrary to the best interests of the United States.

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<sup>3</sup> The supplemental stipend was not included in the RAND pilot. However, it is consistent with the Department's FY 2005 legislative program.